Let’s just jump RIGHT into it.  
  
I think the first important idea to learn is that each chess piece has varying value. I think most people who have ever played a game of chess realized that some pieces were better than others. There is a point system associated with each piece, to give it a value which you can compare to other pieces. These values are somewhat subjective, and many grandmasters have had slightly differing opinions on the exactly values for each piece, but after hundreds of years, pretty much everyone agrees on one particular assignment. Here is that assignment:  
  
King Invaluable (duh, lose piece > lose game, capture piece > win game) OR 3 points  
Queen 9 points  
Rook 5 points  
Bishop 3 points  
Knight 3 points  
Pawn 1 point

This would mean that a queen is about as valuable as bishop, a rook, and a pawn. This would mean that a bishop and a knight are of the same value. This would mean that two Rooks are better than a Queen. You get the point. Let’s address the elephant in the room – the king’s value. King is obviously the most important piece in the game, the 3 point assignment is to give some relative measurement to its usefulness, instead of just its importance. Its offensive and defensive capabilities add up to be about as useful as a Knight or Bishop. However, you cannot safely use its full power until many of the scary pieces that will kill him are removed from the board. If you watch a bunch of chess games, you will see that the king in the early game quickly hides in a corner, and then once the board settles down, he is one of the most active pieces, racing into the action to give that extra edge.

“Slow down, Mike, you just said ‘each piece has varying value’, and then you gave a chart with concrete values for each piece, this doesn’t add up.” Hopefully that ran through your head just now. The value chart above is just a rough guide to follow, the context of the board and placement of the other pieces matters a LOT. This is called “position”. Every advantage you have over your opponent can be classified as either a positional advantage, or a material advantage.   
  
**Material Advantage –** you have a material advantage if the sum of the values of all your remaining pieces is a larger number than that of your opponent. If I have 2 queens and a rook, and you have 1 pawn and 1 knight, I have a material advantage (I have 23 points, you have 4). A material advantage of more than 1 point is often all it takes to slowly grind out a win. A 1 point lead often leads to a draw or a win.

**Positional Advantage –** If I could fully explain a positional advantage in such a short paragraph as I did material advantage, you would need no further information about chess to be the best. Every other complication in chess is a battle over a positional advantage. A positional advantage is separate from the material advantage. You could have a material advantage, but I could have a positional advantage at the same time. A piece could be worth only 1 point on a particular square, but be worth 20 points on its ideal square. This is all contextual, and tends to run into subjectivity and extremely complex analysis.